Mizpah

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/23707447.

Rating:	Explicit
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Categories:	F/M, M/M
Fandom:	Hannibal (TV)
Relationships:	Will Graham/Hannibal Lecter, Molly Graham/Will Graham
Characters:	Will Graham, Hannibal Lecter, Molly Graham
Additional Tags:	AU, meet cute, Young Love, Romance, doting, Devotion, adoration, Fluff, Hot Sex, Pining, Distance, "unrequited" love, Cheating, Adultery, Break Up, Make Up, Explanations, Nostalgia, happy ever after
Language:	English
Series:	Part 17 of Prompt Stories
Stats:	Published: 2020-04-18 Completed: 2020-05-02 Words: 7,557 Chapters: 3/3

Mizpah

by StratsWrote, whiskeyandspite

Summary

“You could ask me out to dinner, instead. The direct approach would surely be a lot easier.”

Will gaped, caught completely off-guard. He supposed he hadn't been entirely subtle, but he hadn’t expected to be called out so blatantly.

“I get off around seven, barring emergencies,” Hannibal told him. “My treat.”

Hannibal and Will met as young men in New Orleans, and fell madly in love. And then Will left. 23 years later, they met again.

Notes

A beautiful request by a lovely friend, who asked for this romantic and beautiful thing to be written. We hope you like it bby, we hope we did it justice for you!

Keep in mind, this story *does* have cheating in it, blatantly and for a while, and while the characters do resolve it in the end, it *is* prevalent and relevant in the story. If this is something that isn't your cup of tea, might be best to skip this one.

See the end of the work for more notes

Chapter 1

Louisiana was sweltering in July. Will didn't understand tourists. They flooded the city like flies on spoiled meat, crowding the streets in a drunken mass.

Mardi Gras was worse, of course, but summer brought all the drunken college students with spare time on their hands. Throwing loud parties and screaming well into the early morning light.

"You're practically a kid yourself, Graham," his coworkers said. "You should take a leaf from their books."

Will was a *police officer* , though. He had *standards* .

And more than enough reason to stay stone cold sober. He'd seen what drink did to his dad on a bad day, and the last thing he needed was to lose his job, the only steady income they had at the moment, since Will was sending money home.

No, he wouldn't be drinking. He would be shepherding wayward drunkards to the hospital all night and collecting them after they'd been cleared by a nurse, slapping them with a fine, and letting them go again. Will understood why they couldn't arrest every single drunk person in New Orleans but he wasn't happy about it. A fine did nothing to dissuade people from being stupid, and they had several days to pay it anyway, in which time they'd be going from bar to bar like studs in heat getting wasted.

It was with the third asshole that Will met him, the new resident in the ER, stethoscope hanging around his neck, hair fine and golden draped far too elegantly over his dark eyes. Will forgot how to breathe for a moment, just staring at him, somehow managed to remember his own name when asked, and *certainly* remembered the name of young up-and-coming doctor Hannibal Lecter when he shook his hand.

Will stayed in the room for the assessment, smiled when Mr. Lecter suggested he was a very caring officer to do so for a stranger, and almost didn't want to leave the hospital when everything was said and done.

He let the guy off with a warning, too. Anything to get back to the streets and get someone else busted and off to the ER.

Anything to see Hannibal again.

The man called him Mr. Graham for two nights before finally caving - considering that Will had been encouraged to use his first name since the beginning and did so with great glee - and calling him Will. Will had never heard his common name sound so fancy before, it damn near did him in.

"You must be very dedicated to your job," Hannibal noted the day after that. The patient had been handled and released, and Will was loitering under the flimsy excuse of "lunch break."

Will flushed scarlet. “It’s an important job,” he blustered. “New Orleans is like any city. Full of trouble if you look in the right places.”

“And I suppose it’s your job to look for trouble,” Hannibal agreed, “but you needn’t look quite so hard.”

“I’m sorry?”

Hannibal smiled at him, eyes narrowed knowingly. “You could ask me out to dinner, instead. The direct approach would surely be a lot easier.”

Will gaped, caught completely off-guard. He supposed he hadn't been entirely subtle, but he hadn’t expected to be called out so blatantly.

“I get off around seven, barring emergencies,” Hannibal told him. “My treat.”

Will laughed, bringing a hand up to his hair to tug it. He was on the daytime shift now, but the next day he’d be on graveyard. And he couldn’t afford to get into something with someone when he had work to keep him occupied, and if he ever wanted to get into the FBI, and -

“Seven,” Will agreed. “I’ll pick you up.”

“In the cruiser?”

Will snorted, shaking his head. “Thought you talked about kinks on a fourth date or something.”

Hannibal shrugged, amused, wrapping his arms around his clipboard as he held it to his chest. “I prefer the direct approach.”

“Yeah I see that,” Will grinned. “Nah, cruiser’s the station’s. I’ll pick you up in my beat up old truck instead.”

“I look forward to it.”

Out of his scrubs, Hannibal dressed so impeccably that Will genuinely considered calling them a cab to get them to dinner. His truck ran like a dream but looked like a reject from shop class, and he couldn’t in good conscience put Hannibal in it dressed to the nines.

Hannibal, however, would hear none of it. “Not like you have to woo me, *Mister* Graham,” he pointed out, climbing into the passenger seat.

“Oh no,” Will said. “First date rules, first names only.”

“I don’t recall that in the handbook,” Hannibal said dryly.

Hannibal picked the restaurant, which was probably for the best. Will had lived in New Orleans for three years - the longest he’d ever stayed in one place before - and could count

the number of times he'd eaten out anywhere but fast food on one hand. He didn't have the time, he didn't have the money.

If he was honest with himself, neither of those things were true. He just couldn't get past a childhood of knowing that such things as restaurants were for "other" people.

They squeezed into a tiny table in a restaurant that hummed with the din of a dozen other conversations. Not so loud as to intrude on their privacy, but clearly a well-loved spot. Hannibal ordered them wine, and Will prayed it wouldn't be obvious he'd never had a sip of wine in his life.

"Are you this forward with every man you date?" Will asked curiously.

"Oh, Will. I haven't begun to be forward with you yet."

Will found himself speechless, and then immediately laughing. It had been a long time since he'd been able to banter with someone, pushing the edges of innuendo into truly inappropriate territory, and he'd missed it. He'd been so caught up with working, with sending money home to dad, with trying to keep his head in order that he'd forgotten that he was twenty-fucking-three and allowed to have a life if he wanted.

For the first time in an age, he wanted.

They ate seafood and finished a bottle of wine between them. Will couldn't take his eyes off Hannibal and the man seemed unable to look away either and that was promising. That was *good* because Will would have hated for this to be just another failed attempt at flirtation. He wanted something more with this man, he needed it.

By the time Hannibal paid the bill, Will was fidgeting like a schoolboy with his keys. The lot was dark when they returned to the truck, lights dim enough to suggest they were there to do a job but weren't very good at it, and Will was grateful, for a change.

He caught Hannibal by his tie and yanked him close, opening his mouth to the kiss he knew was coming. No shy touches here, no tentative exploration of the other's mouths, just tongues invading and smearing close, lips parting too wide to keep the kiss up for more than a few seconds at a time. Ravenous for it, clawing at each other like wolves.

"Hannibal?"

"Hmm?"

"I'm gonna be real forward with you right now."

"Please," Hannibal grinned, flattening a hand warm and heavy over Will's denim-covered hip as he leaned in to kiss him again.

"We're gonna get in my truck," Will said, gasping when Hannibal stepped closer, their hips rocking together in frantic need. "Drive to my apartment. Get up the fucking stairs. Somehow."

“Mm?”

“And you’re gonna yank every piece of clothing off me and fuck me ragged once we’re through the door.” Will finished, breathless and needy, clutching to Hannibal’s arm as the other pulled away to regard him. Will narrowed his eyes in challenge. Hannibal licked his lips.

“Get in the truck, Will,” he agreed.

They barely made it. Had Will lived any further outside of New Orleans, he would have pulled the truck over and dragged Hannibal overtop of him right there in the street.

As it was, Hannibal was on him before he’d even shut the door, holding Will to his word. He shoved Will’s shirt up and over his head, pebbling his chest with damp kisses.

“Lube,” he demanded in a husky growl. Will nearly tripped over himself trying to get them both back into the tiny bedroom.

The bedroom was so small that it was mostly bed, but that only made it easier for Hannibal to topple him into it. They tore out of their clothes, touching and kissing until it seemed that every inch of skin was alive with sensation.

Will opened for Hannibal eagerly. Even though it had been ages, it felt like they’d fallen into this a thousand times, like they knew just where to touch each other. Hannibal's hands made Will shiver and arch up into the careful thrusts of his fingers.

“In me,” he demanded in a gasp.

Hannibal stroked himself a few times, just to get the rest of the lube off his palm, and lined up. It was an easy entry, Will’s body welcoming Hannibal’s body like a long-lost lover, and when Hannibal was pressed all the way in, Will wrapped his arms around him and kissed him again.

They fucked with the desperation of teenagers; loudly and clumsily, Will groaning Hannibal’s name and clutching his hair, and Hannibal whispering the most ardent filth into Will’s ear that he’d ever heard.

Will came first, a cry of warning only a moment before his body convulsed in pleasure and he spilled slick between them. Hannibal ducked his head, forehead to forehead with Will to look at the mess between them as he continued to pound into Will, sweat lining his brow, dripping from his hair.

Will kissed him.

Hannibal kissed back.

After, they lay sprawled, chests heaving and limbs lax in pleasure, and Will laughed, pressing a hand to his eyes as he licked his lips and hummed, shifting just enough to straighten out the sheets beneath him.

“God that… that was excellent.”

Hannibal hummed, spreading a palm over Will’s chest, feeling his heart hammer beneath his fingertips.

“More than.”

Will snorted. “Remind me why you’re single again?”

“No one wants to date an ER surgeon.”

“Right. No one wants to date a first responder either.”

“That’s settled, then,” Hannibal replied, rolling his shoulders and reaching down over the side of the bed to find his shirt, using it to clean Will up first, then himself, before moving to lay heavily over him with a sigh. “We’ll get a standing reservation at the restaurant for dinner.”

And so they did.

They ate out only once a week - Will’s budget would not stand for more - but they saw each other as often as possible. Sometimes they overlapped for only the briefest of hours, a quickie while one left work and the other headed in.

Sometimes they slept together. Just. *Slept.* Will would wake in the early morning hours to gentle fingertips playing over his face, a kiss against his brow.

“I’ll see you tonight,” in a whisper against his cheek.

They practically lived together, in and out of each other’s apartments so frequently that Hannibal's scrubs found a drawer in Will’s home.

It was a dangerous sort of affection, the kind that was intoxicating, addicting. Will craved Hannibal every second they were apart.

He hated himself for it.

And work was becoming… stranger. Darker. It started when Will was called out as backup to an apparent suicide. But it wasn’t one. Will felt it the moment he stepped in under the police tape. Something had happened at the house but it had not been self inflicted, and it ate at Will in the worst way possible.

“I don’t know how I know,” he told Hannibal one night, chin against Hannibal’s shoulder as the other lay on his side, dozing after a sixteen hour shift. “But it’s like I can see what happened, I can feel what he was feeling when he did it.”

“You should tell them.”

“No, they’ll put me in the psych ward.”

“I’ll be able to see you all the time, then,” Hannibal joked, but he turned to his back to draw his knuckles over Will’s cheek. “Are you on the case?”

“Nah, was just there for backup,” Will rubbed his face and smiled when Hannibal kissed him. “But now I can’t sleep.”

“I can help with that.”

“Stop it,” Will laughed, but made no effort to stop Hannibal pinning him to the bed. He never did. He never wanted to. He felt like he was alive for the first time in his life, that he was actually *living* rather than just making do.

But he stopped sleeping properly, unless Hannibal was in bed with him. And he woke in a cold sweat even when he was, shaking and panting, his head splitting open in pain. He couldn’t do that to Hannibal. Hell, he could barely live with it himself.

The last time they fucked, Will tried to make it perfect. He worshiped Hannibal with his mouth and his hands, pulled cries and growls from him in equal measure.

“I wish you would tell me what thoughts plague you,” Hannibal murmured later, Will tucked against his chest, his nose in Will’s curls.

“How do you know anything’s plaguing me?”

Hannibal’s hand rubbed circles into his stomach. “I always know, with you.”

In the end, the note was only two lines long.

Hannibal.
I’m sorry I wasn’t better for you.

Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

“It’s been a long time, Hannibal.”

“Twenty-three years,” Hannibal said. “And six months.”

Jesus. Will felt like he was caught in a strange karmic loop, and wondered if twenty-three years from now he’d meet Hannibal again somewhere, if the cycle would just continue if he fucked up again.

Chapter Notes

Cheating/adultery starts in this chapter, for those squicking. Stay safe!

“It’s not gonna lie straight,” Will mumbled, as Molly continued to tug at his curls, laughing when, predictably, they *didn’t* lie as she wanted them to.

“You never know.”

“It hasn’t in the seven years you’ve tried,” Will told her, eyes narrowed in amusement as his wife shoved him playfully.

“Smartass. I’m gonna get a glass of wine. *You* aren’t getting another one. You need to stay approachable.”

“You’re right, I’ll need two more for that.” Will replied with a grin. He watched her go before tugging his glasses off to clean them with the hem of his shirt with a sigh. He didn’t want to be here. He never did. It was always Molly who insisted they go to the BAU benefits to ‘mingle’. Will was sure it was because she got a kick out of seeing people do everything in their power to avoid him in public.

He supposed that from the side it was pretty funny to watch. He was hardly intimidating physically.

Will set his glasses to his nose again and rolled his shoulders. He could hear Jack’s booming laugh somewhere to his left and turned to look. He and Bella were entertaining a man who looked like he carried money bags under his clothes, by the size of him, and Will hoped that, if anything, Bella charmed him enough to actually donate.

“Will?”

He turned on reflex, and wondered if perhaps he really *didn’t* need another glass of wine because suddenly time slowed down, everything went quiet, as though he were underwater, and Will thought he’d fallen back in time.

Hannibal.

Hannibal Lecter was here. *Here* . In Virginia. And *now* , not then, not twenty-odd years ago.

He’d aged, of course. It would have been ridiculous for Will to expect him to look the same, to still be the young man that had lured him in so easily.

And yet his hair was still soft and blond, albeit with a few more streaks of grey. His dark eyes still stared into Will, so piercing. When he smiled at Will, it was with *that* smile, the one that he had so often cast upon him when they laid twisted together.

He had a hand extended, as if to shake Will’s own, and Will felt a sudden irrational fear. If he touched that hand, he would be twenty-three again, standing in the ER and staring at the man who would captivate him for weeks.

“Will?”

Hannibal’s voice prodded Will out of his haze. He took his hand, shaking it once and then hesitating before finally pulling away.

“Doctor Lecter,” he said.

Hannibal frowned, his brows drawing together. “Come now, Will, surely we know each other better than that?”

“Do we?” Will asked. He winced at how harsh it sounded. “It’s been a long time, Hannibal.”

“Twenty-three years,” Hannibal said. “And six months.”

Jesus . Will felt like he was caught in a strange karmic loop, and wondered if twenty-three years from now he’d meet Hannibal again somewhere, if the cycle would just continue if he fucked up again.

No, he definitely needed that wine.

He couldn’t speak for a moment, just staring, taking Hannibal in. He’d broadened a bit more around the shoulders, and carried himself in a more dignified manner than he had back in New Orleans. He was dressed… god, he was dressed like an heir to a throne and Will wanted to peel away every single layer of clothing and get to the skin beneath that he remembered in his dreams more often than he’d care to admit.

He dragged a hand through his hair and laughed, shaking his head, peeking up at Hannibal from beneath his fringe like he used to do so often.

Back then.

Back in another time. In another life.

“Look, now you’ve gone and messed it up again,”

Will jerked back into himself as though he’d had an out-of-body experience when Molly touched his hair again, fingers cool with the condensation from her wine glass. He offered her a weak smile before looking to Hannibal again, just to make sure he was still there.

He was.

And suddenly Will *hated* that it wasn’t Hannibal’s hands trying to fix his goddamn curls.

“Sorry,” she laughed, turning to Hannibal when her attempts at taming Will’s hair failed, yet again. She held her hand out. “I’m Molly. Waiting for Will to introduce me would take longer than for democracy to work so I’ve just learned to do it on my own.”

Hannibal shook her hand, then kissed it, his lips grazing the backs of the knuckles. Molly flushed pink, flattered beyond words.

“My wife,” Will ground out, too late to be anything but awkward. If his words upset Hannibal, he showed no sign of it. He gave Molly the same charming smile he’d used on thousands of ER patients.

Molly gave Will an odd look. Hannibal, ever the peacekeeper, smoothly pressed onwards.

“Hannibal,” he said, because of course he was too polite to introduce himself as a doctor when Molly had so casually introduced herself with only her first name. He knew how to read a room, always had.

“Hannibal,” Molly said slowly. Her brows knit together, and Will could see her going through all their conversations, trying to place the name to any of the stories she’d painstakingly dragged from him over the years.

“Will and I were acquainted, years ago,” Hannibal supplied helpfully, ignoring Will’s immediately panicked expression as he continued. “I was on the receiving end of his more inebriated arrestees in New Orleans when I was still a resident.”

Molly whistled, impressed, and brought the glass to her lips. “I imagine you were knocked off your feet with drunkards coming in all the time.”

“It was certainly an experience,” Hannibal agreed, smiling. He looked over at Will then, and Will felt his breath catch. He wanted to be back there, back in that crammed ER that smelled of hospital grade disinfectant and the underlying sourness of regurgitated beer and old sweat. He wanted to be young and stupid again, chatting up the hot soon-to-be doctor. He wanted to be happy again.

The thought hit him like a truck and he snared Molly’s glass to take a drink, humming apologetically when she laughed and looked affronted at the action.

“Unbelievable,” Molly shook her head, leaning nearer to Hannibal as though sharing a secret. “Was he always like this?”

“Alas,” Hannibal shrugged. “He was.”

“Wonderful. You’ll have to come for dinner sometime and tell me *everything* .”

“Molly -”

“I’d love to,” Hannibal agreed, his smile pleasant but Will could tell it was artificial, it wasn’t the smile he’d given Will when he’d called him from across the hall, not the smile he’d given him in bed in the mornings, back when -

“How did you find yourself dragged to this thing?” Will asked, interrupting the gathering wave of nostalgia in his head. “Did you move from surgery to undertaking?”

And there it was, the real smile, peeking wicked and lovely from behind Hannibal’s mask of professionalism.

“No, I’m afraid I’ve done something much worse. I’ve become a psychiatrist and forensic consultant.”

Will flinched. His drink sloshed over the rim of the glass, spilling over his hand. Molly gave him a disapproving look and confiscated it from him.

“You’ve followed me into the battlefields, then,” Will said.

“You always made it seem so interesting.”

Will disagreed. He felt he’d made work sound like a living hell, but there was no dishonesty in Hannibal’s eyes.

There never had been.

“Ignore Will,” Molly said. “He’s been grumpy about psychiatry ever since that doctor started emailing him about contributing to his book.”

“Ah, yes, I believe we are acquainted with the same man. Dr. Fredrick Chilton?”

“Got it in one,” Will murmured.

“He’s mentioned your work once or twice.”

“And your response?”

Hannibal smiled fondly at him. “I would never betray your secrets, Will.”

Will knew that. He hadn’t told Molly, now, what they were to each other. And they were something. They were, for a time, *everything* . And then Will had left.

Because of his secrets, that he never told Hannibal, that he never wanted Hannibal to shoulder.

He didn't betray Will or their prior relationship to Jack either, when he was called in to consult on one of the cases Will was working on. He was perfectly polite when they worked together, profiling a man known as the Minnesota Shrike. He was perfectly professional, and Will couldn't take his eyes off of him.

Hannibal made him breakfast, when they were staying in a hotel together on site.

Will felt like he was going to lose his mind. He ached for him. He missed him. Being close, bantering, laughing, just breathing in his space.

God he was beautiful.

Will wasn't sleeping anymore. He was pacing his room knowing that Hannibal was just a wall away, knowing that they were out of their home state, and when in Rome…

Once. Maybe just once...

No. He had to go for a walk and clear his head, just around the block, maybe get a packet of cigarettes and toss them before he came home to Molly again. Just that. Just a vice. A simple thing to indulge in when he was stressed and overworked and sleepless.

He made it out the door. He made it past Hannibal's… and through it.

Hannibal was not asleep, but he was in those ridiculous matching pajama sets he'd worn too often in New Orleans. He'd start out in the whole set and end up topless by dawn. Or pulled from the entire thing, if Will had anything to say about it.

"You can't sleep," Hannibal said, a statement of fact rather than a question. He closed his book and slid from the bed and God, nothing about his shape had changed at all.

"I could never sleep without you."

Will had no memory of crossing the room, of reaching for Hannibal, but suddenly they were on each other. Hannibal's mouth opened for him and Will took his time memorizing every crevice. He tasted like mint and smelled like chamomile. He would have been drinking tea before bed, like always.

"It's been so long," Hannibal whispered. Will couldn't apologize, but he could cling a little bit closer, reach for him and drag their bodies together.

He shouldn't be doing this. He shouldn't even be thinking about it. But Hannibal had always been at the forefront of his mind, even after he left. Especially after he left. For a time, all Will could think about was how this was for both of their own good, how it would save Hannibal the tears and anguish of being with someone like Will Graham. Then all he could do was compare every lover to Hannibal and find them wanting.

Then he'd met Molly.

As accidentally as he had once met Hannibal, he met Molly. And she was just as bright a spark, just as witty and snarky, just as clever and bold, just as demanding of her pleasure and generous in giving Will his, and she had been the closest equivalent Will had ever found. So he had clung to her instead.

Clung to her as he now clung to Hannibal, hands on either side of his face as he leaned in to kiss him again.

He could feel how hard he was in his own pants, how hard Hannibal was against him when he stepped closer still. And he wanted nothing more than to peel those clothes off and shove Hannibal down on the bed and bury his face between his legs and make him *moan* with need. But he couldn't, he couldn't do that. A kiss was still only a kiss and a kiss Will could excuse with exhaustion and overwhelm.

A kiss and a deliberate, languid rocking against each other that made them breathless, that broke their kiss and had them panting into each other's mouths instead, foreheads pressed together, noses nuzzling side by side.

"God, I missed you," Will sighed, helpless, eyes barely open. He slid one arm around Hannibal's middle and another around the back of his head and held on.

Hannibal's breath stuttered out of him. He held on to Will's hips with a grip that nearly bruised.

"Every day," he whispered, "every day, I ached for you."

It stung to hear. It tore through Will and made him feel like he'd been flayed alive.

He'd felt the same, hadn't he? Years of longing, of *needing.*

Nothing that would come out of Will's mouth right now would be good. He dragged Hannibal's mouth back to his instead, nipping sharply at his lips.

Stupid, stupid, irresponsible, but Will couldn't stand to have the conversation they were leading into. He shoved Hannibal back towards the bed, tugging at the buttons on his stupid shirt.

Hannibal's hands were just as busy with Will's clothes, working enough buttons free before pushing Will back and tugging it over his head, tossing it to the floor. Chest to chest, it was harder to resist the influx of memories, of slow morning love-making pressed heartbeat to heartbeat together, of whispered secrets and snorted giggles over nothing at all at too-early-in-the-morning.

Hannibal sat on the mattress and Will was immediately on him, straddling his hips, shoving him down, holding himself up over him with hands on either side of Hannibal's head as Hannibal's settled on Will's hips.

Will's ring looked almost too-bright against his hand and he sat back suddenly, as though scalded, thumb working it in a nervous turn, over and over and over his finger.

"I can't do this," he sighed, shaking as realization hit him with icy adrenaline. "I can't do this."

Hannibal's eyes followed his, lingering over gleaming metal.

"You've made promises," he said slowly. Will shot him a panicked look.

"She doesn't deserve this," he said, heart heavy.

"It's not fair to her," Hannibal agreed. "And you owe me nothing."

Will flinched. Even now, decades later, Hannibal could cut through him so easily.

"I'm sorry," Will said, scrambling free of Hannibal's suddenly limp hands. "I'm sorry, I'm so sorry."

He left his shirt sprawled open across Hannibal's floor. The next morning, when they met for work, it was as if it had never happened.

Hannibal returned the shirt a week later by slipping it into Will's satchel.

The case ended. The Shrike committed suicide by cop and attempted to take his family with him. Hannibal and Will no longer worked together in a professional capacity.

But Will had his number, still, and looked him up, and found Hannibal's office.

He considered the ethical dilemma of seeing an ex lover as a therapist, considered his personal distaste for the practice and weighed it up against his desire to see Hannibal again in a way that wouldn't come across as suspect.

It was all suspect.

He shouldn't want this.

He shouldn't be doing it.

He made an appointment for Tuesday evening, Hannibal's last for the day, at seven. He arrived just a little early, hair still wet from his shower. He gave Hannibal a crooked little smirk before ducking his head. Hannibal stepped aside and let him in.

As soon as the door was closed, Will caught Hannibal by the lapels of his jacket and yanked him close, mouth opening to welcome his kiss.

Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

> *“You’re beautiful,” Will told him. “You’re exactly as beautiful as the day I met you.”*
>
> *Hannibal huffed a laugh, bracing his palms on Will’s chest, rocking his hips in a slow rhythm that threatened to kill Will. “I’m nearing fifty.”*
>
> *“As beautiful as the day I met you,” Will insisted.*

Chapter Notes

> Thank you for sticking through this journey with us (and them!)

It was exactly how Will remembered it.

They didn’t even make it to the desk. They sprawled on the floor, raw and needy, grinding against each other, hands wrapped around each other’s cocks, biting and sucking and leaving bruises across each other.

They ended up in a sweaty, sticky heap, Hannibal pinning Will bodily beneath him.

Will felt like he was on fire. He’d already come, he was in his *forties* , and all he wanted was to drag Hannibal up to straddle his shoulders and lick at him until he was hard again.

“What are we doing?” Hannibal asked him quietly.

“We aren’t doing anything,” Will said. “Hannibal, when I leave here… this can’t happen again.”

And it didn’t.

Until the next week.

And the next.

And the next.

Until Will went to Hannibal’s house for dinner, fully intending to simply enjoy the food and company and good wine. And he did. They both did. The meal was exquisitely prepared, and

the wine was rich and expensive, and the company… the company made Will feel young again. They laughed together, they reminisced. They thought back to those short - far too short - months together back in New Orleans and fell in love with each other all over again.

Will kept his ring in his pocket.

He followed Hannibal upstairs.

He got him in bed and slid between his legs, taking Hannibal to the back of his throat with a deep and pleased hum. He could suck Hannibal off forever. Will lost his mind when he had his cock in his mouth. The taste, the girth, the sheer masculinity of the whole thing made him come undone at the seams.

And Hannibal's voice, how it broke on soft little moans, the endless mantra of his filthy words broken by a hitch in breathing or a shudder. Will slipped a hand between his own legs and rocked into it, groaning when Hannibal snared a hand in his hair and tugged.

"Will, your goddamn *mouth* , always that goddamn mouth…" Hannibal bared his teeth with a hiss and draped a leg over Will's shoulders. "You know I never swear, I never fucking swear unless it's with you."

Total loss of control. Absolute release.

Sometimes it was like Will could forget.

Like he could lose himself in the give of Hannibal's body.

In the noises he made.

Will would tell himself he was coming to break things off, and find himself naked in Hannibal's bed, Hannibal astride his thighs.

"You're beautiful," Will told him. "You're exactly as beautiful as the day I met you."

Hannibal huffed a laugh, bracing his palms on Will's chest, rocking his hips in a slow rhythm that threatened to kill Will. "I'm nearing fifty."

"As beautiful as the day I met you," Will insisted.

Sometimes Will stayed for hours; they'd fuck, doze, fuck again. Just like before. Just like twenty-three years ago.

Then Molly was out of town for work, and Will practically moved in. They slept together and woke together. They drank good wine and smoked on the porch. Will didn't put on more than his briefs around the house, since they didn't leave it, and Hannibal would catch him by the waist as he passed him in the hallway.

"I'm going to fuck you in the study," Hannibal promised him, a warm purr against Will's ear as the other grinned.

“Oh yeah?”

“Yes. Push you up against the library ladder, spread you wide, work you open with my tongue until you’re shaking.”

Will groaned, bringing a hand up to stroke Hannibal’s face. “That’s some promise.”

“You don’t trust me to deliver?”

Will shrugged, playing up indifference, laughing when Hannibal’s hands squeezed him tighter. “We’ve grown soft,” he said. “We used to leave the bedroom bruised and bitten.”

“Get your ass to my study, Will,” Hannibal told him, snapping the elastic on his briefs playfully. “And get these off when you’re there.”

Hannibal took him apart, just as promised. He licked at him until he was dripping, and when he finally slid his cock inside, Will was shaking.

“I dreamed of this,” Hannibal said, rocking against Will, pinning him against the ladder. Will clung to the rungs, gasping. “I dreamed of your warmth, of your shape.

Will’s hands tightened on the rungs of the ladder. “Don’t,” he warned.

Hannibal’s lips met his shoulder, trailing over fading love bites. “I couldn’t help myself.”

“Hannibal…”

Hannibal twisted his hips and Will cried out, closing his eyes and clinging for dear life.

“God, I missed you, Will.”

It became harder and harder to leave, after that, but Will always did. Somehow, he did. Somehow he got his clothes on and kissed Hannibal until the very last moment and left.

Back home to Molly, who greeted him with a smirk and a playful shove to his shoulder, teasing him about being tired, always so tired.

Too tired to play on the couch, too tired to fuck in bed.

Too tired because he'd given his all to a man who'd found him after all these years, a man who felt like destiny.

"Stay with me," Hannibal whispered, hand heavy and warm over Will's heart as he nuzzled Will's curls. "Just tonight. Til the morning, til the day properly starts."

Hannibal rarely sounded desperate, but he sounded it here. He sounded as helpless as Will felt and it *broke him* . He'd left Hannibal so as not to hurt him, all those years ago, and now he was reading him to pieces, night after night.

Will's breath hitched as he started to speak and Hannibal cling closer, burying his face against Will's neck.

"Please," he breathed. "Please stay with me, Will."

“I can’t,” Will whispered. His arms tightened around Hannibal. He held him close, as if to hold him together. As if he might hold *himself* together. “You know I can’t, Hannibal.”

“How is this any better for her?” Hannibal propped himself up on one elbow, trying to catch Will’s eye. Will had turned avoidance into an art form, but Hannibal knew all of his tricks. He cupped Will’s jaw in his hand, turning his face towards Hannibal’s own. “How is this any better for *you* ?”

Molly deserved a husband that loved her, that cherished her. Will could be that for her, if he tried. She adored him, but she did not look too far beyond the surface.

Hannibal looked good deeply, saw too much. Will could not offer him safety or stability. He couldn’t taint someone else with the shadows that engulfed him.

He took Hannibal’s hand in his own, kissed the knuckles, the wrist.

“Will-“

“Don’t.” Will’s voice cracked and broke. “Don’t do this to me. Just- just be with me. Just for a little while.”

Hannibal looked at him, expression helpless, broken, and leaned in to kiss Will’s cheek, his sigh cooling the place his lips had warmed. “I’m going to take a shower.” He said instead.

The shower was still running when Will closed the door behind him.

He popped his collar, dug about in his pockets for his pack of cigarettes and lit up, waiting for the nicotine to hit his system before he stepped off the porch and moved off down the street.

It wasn’t quiet. Baltimore was never quiet, not even in the witching hour, and Will took solace in that. He couldn’t handle silence right then, couldn’t be alone with his thoughts. He had too many, and all of them were clambering about in the bone arena of his skull vying for dominance, aching to be heard.

All Will could hear was *broken, broken, broken* as his feet hit the sidewalk rhythmically and he made it down another block. He hailed a cab the next block over and mumbled his home address.

He’d never planned this to be his life. In fact, Will hadn’t had a plan for his life at all beyond the tender age of twenty-seven; he’d read about the twenty-seven club when he was younger and found the entire concept thrilling. Going out with a bang, with a mystery, when one was still so young, so passionate, so *promising* .

Instead, he’d been promoted to detective at twenty-seven, and met Molly when he turned thirty-five, and married her a year later when his position at the BAU had been turned into a

consulting and teaching one from that of an active field agent.

Now he was forty-six and rubbing sleep from his eyes as a cab took him home to his wife from his lover's house at 3AM.

C'est la fucking vie, he supposed.

Molly was asleep when he slipped into their room, his shoulders hunched up around his ears, a mangy pup come home with fleas. She murmured something when he climbed into bed; he hushed her with gentle fingertips against her face.

She was a beautiful woman. Sweet and strong. He should have done right by her. Should never have married her, if he was going to stay hung up on a decades long mistake.

He had meant to leave the past in the past. Leave darkness and shadows at work. Pop the pieces of his life into boxes, lock everything away.

But then there had been Hannibal.

Hannibal had dug claws under his skin and burrowed beneath. Hannibal filled Will's every breath, every blink.

"Molly."

It broke from him at the breakfast table. Her name, nothing more, irrevocably shattering their quiet peace.

Molly set her coffee mug down with a quiet sigh. She smiled at him, soft and sad. "It's about Hannibal, isn't it?"

Will blinked at her. "What?"

"Hannibal." She reached for his hand, running her thumb over the knuckles. "It's okay, Will. It's alright. I wish… I wish you'd just *told* me, but we were always just slightly mismatched, weren't we?"

Will didn't know what to say. He felt sick. He hated that he had done this, *him* , that he had hurt Molly this way, that he had broken what they had started to build. In the decade they'd been together, they had made a life, they had made it work. They'd tried for kids, but it never took, they stuck to their work, adopted dogs, renovated the house as they paid it off.

It was easy. It was comfortable. But neither could say they were particularly *happy* .

They just… were.

Will freed his hand and brought the heels of both against his eyes, pressing there until he saw stars, until he could breathe again.

"I'm sorry." he gasped.

“I know,” Molly didn’t sound angry. She didn’t even sound defeated. She just sounded sad. Will hated that. He hated himself for it. “I know, Will, I do. D’you know, I wanted to be so mad at both of you? I tried. I have so many reasons to be but… God, I haven’t seen you smile like he makes you smile since we first met. You don’t smile like that with me -”

“Molly -”

“And I don’t smile like that with you,” she finished, tilting her head to look at him when Will finally dropped his hands and looked up, sniffing. “Shit happens, Will, sometimes you just don’t work out.”

“I hurt you,” Will admitted gently, wanting to feel some anger, some pain, something from her that felt like retribution. He didn’t get it. She just shrugged.

“Yeah,” she said. “But hurting you back won’t make me feel better.”

He wished it would. He wished he could offer himself up and let her tear him to shreds, but it wasn’t her way. She’d always been too good for him.

“You can have everything-“ he began. She snorted, rolling her eyes.

“Don’t be so dramatic, Will. We’ll split it fairly.” She narrowed her eyes. “But I get the Chevy.”-

He laughed, helpless and blown away by this woman. “Of course.”

Will didn’t know how to tell Hannibal. He thought he should have a speech prepared. Flowers. An apology, maybe, for more than twenty years of silence.

Instead of a speech, he showed up with shaking hands and a tan line where his wedding ring should have been. Instead of flowers, he handed Hannibal divorce papers, already signed.

In answer, Hannibal gathered Will against him and held him close.

It took a couple weeks to sort everything out, and in the end Molly kept the house and the car, because it was more convenient for her, and she’d just started working on the downstairs bathroom before shit hit the fan. Will didn’t mind. He’d been mentally living with Hannibal for months at that point, and when the question came up it wasn’t even a question but a confirmation that Will was moving in.

The dogs… the dogs were another matter. For the time being they stayed with Molly, but she reminded him that he had “full visitation rights” for as long as it took him to get settled. The dogs were always more Will’s thing, in the end. She loved them dearly, but they were *his* pack; she found her pack among people.

For the first few days, all Will did was sleep. He woke to Hannibal sitting on the bed reading, or to him pressed close and still slumbering. He ate when Hannibal fed him, and showered, but he was *exhausted* . He felt like he’d shouldered off a great weight and the strain it had taken to carry it was catching up to him.

When he finally woke up and felt refreshed, he waited for Hannibal to get home and greeted him at the door with a kiss, chaste and warm.

“I owe you an explanation, huh,” he said, watching Hannibal take off his shoes and coat in the hall. “For the twenty three years of silence.”

Hannibal hesitated.

He was not a hesitant man, but Will could see the signs of yearning in him. He knew them well, now.

Then he straightened. He hung his coat. He greeted Will with a soft kiss to his lips.

“You owe me nothing,” he murmured. “You’ve come back to me. Your debt has been repaid tenfold.”

Will blushed pink all the way to his ears. “But you want to know.”

“I want to know everything about you,” Hannibal said, guiding Will towards the kitchen. Nothing would ever make Hannibal delay dinner. “That doesn’t mean I’ll force it from you. “

“No force,” Will promised. He settled in at the island, perched on a stool, and sipped at the wine Hannibal poured him. “You remember how work used to get to me.”

“It still does,” Hannibal said with a frown. “Don’t think I hadn’t noticed.”

Will ducked his head, said nothing. Hannibal could always see him so clearly, could always read him as though Will were a poster on a wall, not even a book. He swallowed and continued.

“It started when I had to help at that scene, the murder. I could… *see* how it was done. I could put myself in the mind of the man responsible. I… *empathized* with him.” Will chewed his lip, listening to Hannibal continue to gather things to start their dinner. He just looked out into the middle distance a moment more before sighing.

“It scared me,” he admitted. “It scared me so much, I didn’t know what was going on. Found out later it’s an actual psychological disorder,” he laughed, shaking his head when Hannibal hummed agreement. “But I was scared that I would become like them. Like those killers. And I couldn’t drag you into that, not when you were saving lives and being so… so *good.* I couldn’t sully you with that.”

“You never would have,” Hannibal told him gently, moving to rest his weight on the island too, across from Will. “You are extraordinary, Will. Nothing you could do would ever have me think differently.”

“Clearly,” Will mumbled, wincing as he said it. He looked up at Hannibal again. “Sorry.”

Hannibal’s hand squeezed his. “I missed you,” he said. “For over twenty years, I missed you. And Will, I do not give a damn.”

Will choked on a laugh, shaking his head. “I-“

“No,” Hannibal said firmly. “I’m glad to know. I’m glad you told me. But I won’t hold those years against you and I won’t let you hold them against yourself. This is our time now, Will, together.”

“I don’t deserve you.”

Hannibal pulled Will’s hand to his mouth and let his lips brush gently across the knuckles. “On the contrary,” he said. “I’ve fought for years to earn *you.* And I intend to enjoy my prize.”

End Notes

Mizpah (n.)
Hebrew
The deep emotional bond between people, especially those separated by distance or death.

FIND US ON TWITTER | TUMBLR | PILLOWFORT

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!